

## DOING EVIL INSTEAD OF GIVING TO GOD WHAT IS HIS, LK 20:19-26

**19**The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them. **20**So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they could deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor. **21**They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. **22**"Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" **23**But He detected their trickery and said to them, **24**"Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." **25**And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." **26**And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent. - Luke 20

### 1. **HOW NOT TO RESPOND TO CRITICISM** - v19,

- a. *"The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour,..."*
- b. The parable was about them and Jesus said they were toast - unless they repent, that's the case.
- c. Jesus embarrassed and exposed them, **Mk 3:6**. When Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, they were embarrassed and plotted with the Herodians how they could kill Him.
- d. When our feelings get hurt, when we are confronted for wrong, we have a choice. People often respond to criticism with a counter attack. Maybe it is a pet peeve or a some fault against the person not mentioned before. This is not the way to respond to genuine criticism being brought against you. The motive is always suspect.
- e. This is a flaw in character.
- f. So they do not repent, but instead they begin plotting to get rid of Jesus, for good.
- g. So that pride does not ruin us, We need an honest and repentant heart as Zacchaeus, a Nicodemus, or Cornelius.

### 2. **DECEPTION IS THE DEVIL'S TOOL:**

TO OPPOSE WHAT'S RIGHT, YOU MUST RESORT TO DECEPTION.

WHEN YOU DECIDE YOU WILL PROTECT YOUR LIE, YOU HAVE TO BECOME A DECEIVER, v20

- a. *"So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement..."*
- b. They *begin watching* for any mistake. Do not underestimate the deceptiveness of men. Everything is an opportunity if you can twist it.
- c. They are **liars** like their father, the devil: "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires" **Jn 8:44**.
- d. *"They sent spies to pretend to be righteous"* - evil people will employ others into their evil schemes. "Look, you go to him and pretend to be a disciple, pretend to be a sincere person. Get information. Look for some weakness."
  - i. Jesus warned of this: "**Beware** of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." **Mt.7:15**.  
Paul warned too: "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ." **2 Cor. 11:13**.
  - ii. It's no wonder that Jesus referred to them as hypocrites: they played games and pretended only to be righteous.
- e. They employed **flattery** to get Him off His mark:

- i. First, the one truth they spoke: "*Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth.*"
  - 1. They don't believe it, even if the people do, but they are willing to flatter him thinking He will drop His guard.
  - 2. A proud person would be trapped. But not Jesus.
- f. Beware, because the devil will use every trick in the book.
- g. How to separate Jesus from the law, from the people, from the disciples, and endanger Him. So they began looking for an angle. How can we trap him? Can we get him to say something that we can use to incriminate him?

### 3. **THE AIM OF THE QUESTION: GET JESUS IN TROUBLE WITH SOMEONE**

- a. "*that they could deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor*" - If they can get Jesus in trouble with the law, that would cinch it.
  - i. Can we get him to say something seditious? Something to foment insurrection?
- b. "*Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?*" v22.
  - i. Artfully designed question intended to catch Jesus if He answers yes or no.
  - ii. Trouble with the People? They knew **the people** were watching, v19,26
    - 1. The people detested the tax. To say yes would rile them
    - 2. Plenty of zealots would love to rebel against the government of Rome. But Since God wants us to be an example, He doesn't counsel us to be anarchists who strive to overthrow the government.
    - 3. His answer risked losing followers.
  - iii. Trouble with the law? To suggest not paying would rile the government. Imagine someone asking you if Christians should pay taxes to Uncle Sam. If you counseled people not to, you could be in trouble.
    - 1. Of course this is the direction they were hoping their lured Him into.
    - 2. Eventually it would be His claim to be the Messianic King that would run Him afoul of the law.
  - iv. To say nothing would satisfy no one.

### 4. **THE WISE ANSWER IS ONE THAT STOPS THEIR FOOLISHNESS** - Jesus knew their trickery

- a. 24"*Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?*" They said, "*Caesar's.*" 25*And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*
- b. Jesus' Answer: *Jesus said to render to Caesar what is Caesar's*
  - i. Whose name was on it? Caesar, a Roman coin. The Jews and most of the developed World used the Roman system of roads, security and much more. So there was something that benefited from and there for something that they were to pay for. To pay to Caesar and to give honor to Caesar was to give what was his.
- c. **Caution:** Do not fall into the narrative created by people hostile to Jesus.
  - i. But you might say, it's a good question worthy exploring. Really?
    - 1. Jesus did not set out to talk on civic duties and paying taxes. Someone rightly said that if these Jews had lived right in the sight of God and had always given to God what was His, they would have never had to bow to Caesar and pay Cesar a dime.
    - 2. By their unfaithfulness they submitted themselves to a foreign nation.
    - 3. Does Jesus answer them? "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's"? Does Jesus say "what is Caesar's"? Many people were opposed to paying the tax? What did they hear? Many would say we should obey the law. What did they hear?

4. My concern is that we not get lured into a false narrative lest we jump in and appear to be quizzing Jesus ourselves. It's a trick designed to trap Jesus and Jesus leaves them stupefied with their answer. And their plot is not advanced!
- d. The Answer About Paying Taxes. Should we pay taxes?
  - i. If we want to get bound up in a discussion over taxes, we have fallen into the truck of the deceivers.
  - ii. But what about taxes? "6For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 7Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." Romans 13:6-7.
  - iii. It's clear that you or I would go to jail if we did not pay taxes.
  - iv. Clearly, taxes were paid by Jesus. And Paul says they are necessary: "*tax to whom tax*".
  - v. Even a tax that wasn't rightly levied against you, even this Jesus paid in Mt 17:24-27. The temple "two drachma tax" at Capernaum, that Jesus suggested was not owed by God's people, but He nevertheless paid it, albeit from the mouth of a fish.
- e. But Jesus did say something we may find less enjoyable to consider: ARE WE GIVING TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S?

### **CLOSING: THE WISDOM OF JESUS**

1. **First**, be careful to respect his wisdom and resist the temptation to justify self. It leads to killing truth and Jesus.
2. **Be honest**: if you must resort to trickery, you are not standing on the truth.
3. **Avoid** side issues: Let's not lose sight of the main issue: The pharisees set out to trick Jesus, to frame Him, but he was too wise.
  - a. Don't let the opponent drive the narrative. Bystanders might easily have skipped into the ploy, which is to Trap Jesus.
  - b. Jesus did not answer the question.
4. **Give To God**: Instead of talking about giving to Caesar, ask if we are giving to God what is God's?
  - a. See, we can debate about what is Caesar's. But we know that everything is God's and that He deserves our worship and praise. Are we giving to God what is God's? That's the question and that's something that would prick the opponents.
5. **Be amazed at Jesus**: *26And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.*
  - a. Jesus stunned them into silence. Let us be stunned into glorying Him.
  - b. This is what keeps attracting us to Jesus: Like Paul says. "*19For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS"; 20and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS."* **1 Cor. 3:19-20**